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an opportunity now to put one of these difficult issues behind us as we seek to continue the progressive and harmonious development of our province.

The architects of Confederation — John A. Macdonald and George Brown — were Protestants who preferred the development of a non-sectarian education system. However, in order to secure their national vision, they accepted and advocated the protection of denominational "common" schools in *The British North America Act*. All Ontario provincial governments since that time have interpreted the "common" schools of that day as the elementary system. Consequently, dual elementary Roman Catholic and public education systems have been maintained and equitably funded across Ontario.

Historically, it has been possible for elementary schools to continue through to the tenth grade, and, in recent years, many Roman Catholic school boards have organized their programs, with public support, to enrol pupils at the Grade 10 level.

In keeping with the understood interpretation of the Canadian Constitution, secondary Roman Catholic schools have not been provided with public funds beyond Grade 10. Roman Catholic families have seen, and continue to see, such a limitation on public funds beyond this level as arbitrary and inequitable.

Guided by Three Principles

In considering, at this time, whether or not the Government of Ontario should extend financial support to secondary Roman Catholic schools, as has been requested by the Roman Catholic community for over half a century, we have been guided in our deliberations by three fundamental principles, all of which must be respected in the resolution of this matter.

First, we must not only respond to the claims of the moment, but we must also work to honour those contracts and obligations which were struck to create a united Canada in 1867.

Second, we must not undertake a course of action, that by its nature or in its execution, would cripple or limit the viability of our non-denominational public secondary school system, which is accessible to all and universally supported and which will always remain the cornerstone of our education system.

Third, we are not mere hostages to old arrangements. So, we have a contemporary responsibility to be sure that our answer on this question strengthens rather than fragments the social fabric of this province.

While men and women of courage and conviction have been divided on this issue, up to now, no Ontario government has felt it was able to discharge its duty according to these fundamental principles while at the same time granting public funds to a complete Roman Catholic secondary school system. Mr. Speaker, I now believe this can be responsibly undertaken and, therefore, it is our obligation to resolve the issue.

This New Direction

This new direction is not compelled by or founded upon a reinterpretation of old statutes or jurisprudence. The letter of old law cannot substitute for common sense. Further, we must all appreciate that historic benefits must keep up with changing times. Roman Catholic families do not object to paying their share of the cost of an extensive universal non-denominational education system. However, they cannot at the same time accept a logic which argues that their taxes should be up-to-date, but their historic benefits should be locked in time.

Since the beginning of our parliamentary democracy, freedom and, therefore, diversity and pluralism, have been fundamental values. Our public school system has always been fundamentally important and our commitment in this regard must not be diminished.

The strength of Ontario's educational heritage rests in the general merit and value of a universally accessible, publicly supported school system. However, experience has now taught us that a limitation on public funding which confines it to the public secondary school system is no longer required to sustain the viability of public education in Ontario.

Secondary System Not Jeopardized

Implementing a dual secondary system will necessitate wise administration, which I will address in a moment. Yet, I am confident that our secondary system, in which we can all take considerable pride, will not be jeopardized. For some time, a third of the students in our dual elementary system have been enrolled in our Roman Catholic schools. And, through the administration of core curriculum and proper funding, our public elementary school system certainly has remained viable and, indeed, second to none. With more stable enrolments at this time, along with appropriate funding, core curriculum and, soon, province-wide testing, there is absolutely no reason to believe that our public secondary system will perform any less effectively in the future.

Of course members should be aware of the fact that to protect our public education system, while assuming some costs which are now carried privately by Roman Catholic families, will require additional public funding. While some of this can be accomplished through appropriate redistribution, our ultimate objective will remain one of providing high quality education at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayers.

In practical terms, I do not believe we could or should create a separate public system for a small segment of our community that wishes to isolate itself. However, we are addressing today the aspirations of a good third of our families who have demonstrated their competence and determination to provide contemporary education for their children.

Must Build Fellowship and Common Values

Above all, Mr. Speaker, I wish to address a concern I have always held and which has been honourably put forward by many others. In all our endeavours, we must seek to build fellowship and common values, not segregation and mutual suspicion. But dualism today surely does not mean upholding, advancing, or legitimizing the ancient idea of a separate Protestant Ontario and a separate Roman Catholic Ontario.

Clearly, our Roman Catholic citizens want to maintain their own school system for their children. However, our community is not, as tragically some other parts of the world still are, divided on religious grounds. Roman Catholics, regardless of their educational backgrounds, work equally within our society and are every bit as ambitious to share fully in the life and progress of Ontario.

If we are to serve the spirit and the realities of 1867, we should acknowledge that basic education was what was recognized then and, today, basic education requires a secondary, as well as an elementary, education. As the non-denominational system has evolved to meet society's needs, so too has the Roman Catholic system.

The extension of financing to separate school Grades 9 and 10 demonstrates that financial and operational arrangements can evolve over time and honour the intentions of the original constitution. If we work co-operatively and prudently, we can complete this task without compromising the quality of our public schools, while demonstrating the essential justice and good faith of our society.

Therefore, it is the Government's intention to permit the Roman Catholic school boards to establish a full range of elementary and secondary education and, as part of the public system, to be funded accordingly. This new program will be introduced at the rate of one year of secondary education for each school year beginning September 1, 1985. This process will be accomplished in much the same way that we are implementing the new Special Education provisions and will parallel the revised secondary school structure.

Some flexibility will be included so as to allow for a phase-in period that is in keeping with the capacity of the individual board in question.

Set up Commission

Our first step will be to set up a planning and implementation commission to guide and advise all parties on the implementation of this reform. It will receive and adjudicate the plans submitted by the Roman Catholic school boards. It will advise the Government on required changes in the *Education Act* and, most important, it will conduct arbitrations that may well be required in some instances arising out of the sharing or transfer of schools and school locations, as well as other matters related to the transition.

This commission will be vital to the effective execution of this program and will be made up of representatives of

the Ministry of Education, the education community at large, and the Roman Catholic community.

It is not the expectation of the Government, and I trust the separate school systems across Ontario will recognize this clearly, to expend large sums on new capital grants to accommodate demands for new secondary school facilities. Rather, the commission will ensure that our abundant existing capital stock is effectively employed to provide a full range of programs.

May I underline this point. As my predecessor, John Robarts, indicated, a duplication of facilities, caused by such a policy, would be impractical and indefensible. The first planning task is to make maximum use of existing school plants.

Must Consider Teachers

Equally, we must consider the interests of our secondary school teachers. It has been a long established practice for elementary Roman Catholic school boards to have Roman Catholics constitute the large majority of the teachers they employ. In light of declining enrolments in our secondary system, it would be unacceptable and unfair to extend this practice to the new Roman Catholic secondary school system. Consequently, for a period of ten years, Roman Catholic school boards will employ non-Catholic teachers in their secondary schools and once hired, these teachers will be permitted to earn tenure, religion notwithstanding.

The planning and implementation commission will work with the Ontario Teachers' Federation, the Education Relations Commission, and others to assure that all teacher personnel matters are addressed in a fair and equitable manner.

Further, Mr. Speaker, while the essence of this new policy is to enrich the education resources available to Roman Catholic families in Ontario, it is my hope that the new Roman Catholic school boards will consider, in the most positive way, granting all students and their families universal access to publicly supported Roman Catholic schools, should such access be desired, limited only by the availability of space and the designation of assessment support.

I should also take this opportunity to state that it is still the wish of the Government, pending the response to questions now before the courts, to create within certain boards of education, panels of trustees, elected by Franco-Ontarian electors, who will have defined powers governing classes and schools where French is the language of instruction.

Resolve an Historic Issue

Mr. Speaker, while my hope today is to resolve an historic issue in our traditional public education structure, what we have decided to do legitimately raises questions about the place of independent schools in our province. While rights are not at issue, the diversity and quality of our society is affected and served by these schools. The Government

believes it is timely and useful to review the role of these schools in educating our children. Thus, a commission of inquiry will be established by the Ministry of Education:

- to document and comment on the role of independent schools;
- to assess whether public funding, and its attendant obligations, would be desirable and could be compatible with the nature of their independence; and
- to identify possible alternative forms of governance for these schools and make recommendations for changes deemed to be appropriate.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to address briefly our responsibility in funding education generally. The current formula for calculating General Legislative Grants has been in place since 1969. Also, there is concern about the costs of education and the ability of school boards to contain such costs.

Given these considerations, the Government intends to set up a commission to inquire into the financing of elementary and secondary education in Ontario. This examination is appropriate in order to ensure efficiency, economy, and effectiveness. It is also timely, as the province moves to extend the support for the Roman Catholic school system.

Both the commission on independent schools and the commission on the financing of elementary and secondary education will report in May 1985, and the responses to their recommendations will be concluded by January 1986.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, may I return for a moment to the basic decision upon which we seek the understanding and acceptance of our community at large — the extension of public funding for our secondary Roman Catholic school system.

Of course, there will be difficulties and clearly, as with all changes in the order of things, in securing new benefits, some advantages which may seem to be found in the status quo will be given up. However, I am convinced that our secure and vibrant school system is not threatened and the majority of our citizens who support our non-sectarian system will not be hurt.

As Sir John A. Macdonald explained the accommodations of his time, to his majority, over a century ago:

"We do not want to stand on the extreme limits of our rights. We are ready to give and take. We can afford to be just; we can afford to be generous, because we are strong."

It is not my hope, nor my expectation, to settle all differences today — no one enjoys the last word in a democracy. However, as has been the case in nation-building and constitutional reform, it is my strong conviction that the path we have chosen is worthy of broad agreement and will serve our common interests.

It is time, Mr. Speaker, to put behind us any lingering doubts about our regard for one another and to re-dedicate ourselves to the bright hopes of our future.

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Ontario

Elementary and Secondary School Funding in Ontario

A statement to the legislature by William G. Davis Premier

June 12, 1984



Mr. Speaker:

I wish to inform members of the Legislature that the Government has undertaken a careful and fresh review of the outstanding issues surrounding public support for the Roman Catholic school system, and this afternoon, I wish to outline a new course we have decided to pursue.

As colleagues on both sides of the Legislature well appreciate, this has been a subject of long and heartfelt controversy in the development of Ontario, ever since we assumed the burdens and choices that go with responsible government in 1842.

In an open dynamic society such as ours, basic issues are not resolved or sincere differences settled in silence. However, we have managed to grow together because we have respected each other and, from time to time, we have reconciled long-standing differences and then moved forward. Progress is made, not by opening old wounds, but by healing old grievances. In that spirit, I believe we have



